

Abstract

The active interest of artists in the Liturgical Movement made the difference: the network of the Brussels glass studio Colpaert.

Florent-Prosper Colpaert (1886-1940) is recognised as one of the most important and internationally renowned Belgian master glaziers of the Interbellum. Adding a thirteen year work experience in Paris to his Saint-Luke arts degree, Colpaert proved an exceptional figure who combined traditional stained glass with new glass types and techniques. Leading a Brussels based executing studio, he put his creative craftsmanship at the service of an array of talented artists. Going even further, he stimulated artists to design innovative stained-glass windows in the context of profane as well as church architecture.

I put forward that, for each of the artists influenced by Colpaert and interested in church windows, the starting point of their personal conception of sacred art was the artistic ideal of Maria Laach and Beuron, the Benedictine abbeys at the source of the Liturgical Movement. This ideal involved the broad modernisation of liturgical art, which aimed to enhance the luster of church interiors, as inspired by the texts of Pius X (*Motu Proprio*, 1903). The principle of this artistic production tied to liturgy was the conservation and continuation of the tradition. The fertile soil for this artistic rejuvenation was found precisely in the new liturgical ideas. Without being modernist, this ideal was open to new materials and a responsible collaboration with the industry. One of the central aims of this movement was to technically improve the stained-glass window.

I wish to demonstrate that the general evolution of esthetic notions on sacred art, propagated by the Liturgical Movement and spread effectively through the Benedictine abbeys, constitutes the basic cause for the fact that an executing glass studio such as Colpaert's, which was not exclusively focused on church windows, attracted so many artists to realise innovative windows in this context.

To do this, I shall map out the network and motivations of artists and religious artist movements who gathered around the Colpaert studio. Anto Carte (1886-1954) was the pre-eminent designer among them. He designed the stained-glass windows for the anew Benedictine *Cercle des Artistes de la Croix Latine* (founded in 1923), which was directly inspired by the conceptions of the Liturgical Movement. Among the designers who had their drawings executed by Colpaert were, among others, members of the Walloon artist group Nervia (founded in 1928 by Carte) such as Léon Navez (1900-1967) and Rudolphe Strebelle (1880-1959), but also the expressionist Albert Servaes (1883-1966), the artist Eugene Yoors (1879-1975), member of *De Pelgrim* (founded in 1924), and Louis-Charles Crespin (1892-1953), one of the most sought after designers for restauration projects.

After 1940 the studio was lead by the son, Jacques Colpaert, who had studied with Anto Carte at the Brussels Academy. He executed and mounted in 1949 the stained glass windows in the lateral chapel of the Saint-Alena church in Saint-Giles (Brussels) – architecturally speaking a

bridge between the Interbellum and the post-war period –, which points to a continuity of influence.